



## House Bill 1131

### *Public Health - Buprenorphine - Training Grant Program and Workgroup*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 5, 2025

From: Karrington Anderson and Charlotte Fleckenstein

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1131. This bill establishes the Buprenorphine Training Grant Program to assist counties with offsetting the cost of training paramedics to administer buprenorphine. Additionally, HB 1131 requires the Maryland Office of Overdose Response (MOOR) to convene a workgroup to study access to buprenorphine in the State.

This legislation represents a significant step forward in Maryland's ongoing battle against the opioid crisis, ensuring that first responders have the necessary resources to provide life-saving care. Buprenorphine, also known as Suboxone, is an evidence-based medication for opioid use disorder that helps reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms while stabilizing brain chemistry. Access to this medication at the moment of crisis—particularly when administered by trained paramedics—can be pivotal in an individual's path to recovery.

Counties, Local Health Departments, and public safety employees serve as the front-line responders to the opioid epidemic, using settlement funds to expand public health and safety interventions. Programs like Frederick County's Community Outreach And Support Team (COAST) have demonstrated the profound impact of such interventions. The COAST team includes community paramedics and peer recovery specialists who provide medical care and emotional support. COAST not only provides free initial doses of buprenorphine but also helps patients transition into long-term treatment, addressing both immediate and systemic needs.

The opioid epidemic continues to take a devastating toll on Maryland communities, requiring an all-hands-on-deck approach. HB 1131 provides critical funding through the Opioid Restitution Fund to support paramedic training, ensuring counties have the capacity to deliver this essential service. This bill recognizes the importance of broader accessibility to buprenorphine by convening a workgroup to explore and enhance statewide access. MACo appreciates being included in this workgroup and looks forward to contributing to these efforts.

Counties are on the front lines of the opioid crisis, and HB 1131 provides a much-needed tool to expand effective, life-saving interventions. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1131.